

# Helen Keller Tells of Her Novel Sensations on Stage

Although Blind and Deaf She Seems Supremely Happy as She Talks to Audience.

FOR exemplification of the power of the human mind over material obstacles the incidents cited and theories expressed by Sir Oliver Lodge and other scientists and psychologists seem to be mere piquant farce compared with the demonstration of Miss Helen Keller last week at the Palace Theatre.

Many of these lectures have audiences that go to a lecture to hear their own theories encouraged. That makes it easy for the lecturer.

At the Palace vaudeville theatre on last Monday afternoon, after a clever act of what is termed "sidewalk patter" was finished and applauded, the electric programme announced "Miss Helen Keller."

Probably every one in the audience had heard some time or other of Helen Keller, blind, deaf and dumb from the age of nineteen months, who after battling with the impossible for years has learned to speak. But it was only a dim, far off story, read in magazines or newspaper years ago. When Helen Keller was eight the fact that she was learning to read and study through the sense of touch was much written

about. Certainly no one had the faintest idea of what a blind, deaf woman, who had been taught to speak with as much mechanical difficulty, almost, as would be experienced in producing speech from a statue, would be doing in vaudeville, where the swiftest, trickiest sort of entertainment—"stuff with a punch"—is provided for audiences whose critical anticipation of entertainment is set to a hair trigger.

Has Large Bright Blue Eyes.

The curtains went up, the stage set as a drawing room. After a preliminary announcement a tall, rather handsome woman appeared in the opening at the rear of the stage. She advanced a few steps, then tottered a little, as one who has some difficulty in balancing. She brushed against a piano and advanced to the footlights, where another woman had been waiting her.

The huge audience realized with a trace of uneasiness that this woman was blind, although she has large bright blue eyes which have the deceptive appearance of being unusually strong and clear. It was Helen Keller, a vigorous, healthy looking woman. Her companion, Mrs. Anne Sullivan Macy, who has been her friend and teacher since Miss Keller's childhood, explained the difficulty in teaching her to speak and the patience, cleverness and will power and faith displayed by Miss Keller, which really seems almost superhuman.

Unable to hear the voices of others, Miss Keller learned to talk by feeling of the throats and lips of others, and after years of effort mastered by this mechanical toll what others have as a divine gift, easy as breathing. Such intensity of interest has rarely been seen in the theatre as shown by

those audiences last week in the big vaudeville theatre. The difficulties conquered and the intense human striving of this woman seem to strike the audience in a great wave of sympathy. For a few moments they were perplexed by her strange, carefully articulated manner of speaking, but this, too, only added to the realization of Miss Keller's triumph. Then the beholders saw that before them was a woman who seemed supremely happy, and that added to the wonder. Before she had been on the stage two minutes Helen Keller had conquered again, and the Monday afternoon audience at the Palace, one of the most critical and cynical in the world, was hers.

Miss Keller afterward told a reporter about some of the novel sensations she experienced. One can speak with her very rapidly, with Mrs. Macy conveying the questions and answers by hand reading with Miss Keller, or more slowly when Miss Keller places one of her hands on the interviewer's mouth, and another on his throat, by which method she receives with no difficulty whatever conversation in an ordinary, deliberate pace.

Feels Waves of Air.

"Deprived of some of my senses others have developed extraordinarily," she said. "I could tell before I had been on stage a minute that there was a very large audience. I feel the waves of air made by the breathing and the pulsations of many persons. This sense, so keen, was almost a disadvantage to me. I felt through my feet the strange jarring caused by two horses which were back of the stage for another. I did not know what this was and believed that a number of persons had for some reason rushed in on the stage from the street or from the audience. But as I did not feel their presence, I decided it must be furniture falling, or something like that."

Miss Keller's talk is of course slow and difficult, but it does not seem to tire her to talk. Indeed she gives the impression of great vitality. She recently had been appearing on the lecture platform, but the theatre is vastly different and seemed to provide her with

much mental stimulation. In her happiness Miss Keller displayed a pretty wit and in reply to some question asked by the audience "came back" several times with a quickness and good humor that the keenest of experienced monologists might well have envied. The girl, who though deaf and blind took the regular course in Radcliffe College, starting at the age of 19, was smart enough to get the idea of vaudeville before she started in it.

Miss Keller receives as high a salary as any one in vaudeville. The attitude of E. F. Albee and others in the Keith vaudeville firm on this point was that at various times persons of no worth had received large sums to enter vaudeville on the strength of mere notoriety and that Miss Keller was entitled to as much, whether her appearance was a success or a vaudeville entertainment or not. It was a success, and everybody is happy.

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TEACHER NOW ACTRESS.

Miss Phoebe Appleton Has Former Pupils as Theatre Guests.

When a young school teacher quits pedagogy for the stage, what more fitting than that she should invite her recent pupils to see her perform. They might still bring apples for their dear teacher.

Miss Phoebe Appleton, one of the dancers in "The Night Boat," Charles Dillingham's new musical comedy at the Liberty, entertained at last Wednesday's matinee six children who a year ago were her pupils at Public School No. 170, located at 87 West 111th street. Miss Appleton, following her graduation from the Julia Richman

High School three years ago, took the preparatory course in pedagogy, qualified as a school teacher and was assigned to Public School No. 170, where she taught for two years, taking a course in stage dancing evenings, which qualified her in a short time for a part in musical comedy.

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